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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [MP](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [MA](#)

SUBJECT: EAC CONVENED TO DISCUSS INCREASING ANTI-AMERICAN PRESS AND THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE TAKE OVER

¶1. (SBU) An Emergency Action Committee (EAC), chaired by DCM Stromayer, was convened on March 17, 2009 to discuss the recent increase of anti-American press and the military take over of the Presidential Palace. Also discussed were the present status of the other Presidential Palace located in Iavoloha, with the Malagasy president in residence.

¶2. (C) The DCM reported that he, the Ambassador and members of the international diplomatic community had met earlier in the morning with the Foreign Minister and the Minister of Commerce and Economics to discuss the situation. The Ministers had both advised the president to resign and leave the country, to no avail, and requested that the diplomatic community go to the Palace and encourage the president to resign. The community was reluctant to comply with this request because the president needed to reach this decision with his advisors. If he did decide to resign, the international community stood ready to assist his departure. No one could guarantee that an emissary would receive safe passage in and out of the palace. In addition, as evident by a flurry of recent press articles, a visit to the palace by a foreign diplomat would possibly be interpreted badly in the press, possibly leading to retaliation or other consequences against the foreign community.

3.(C) The Defense AttachQ Officer's (DAO) major concern was not the imminent take over of the palace, but the vacuum that would follow as the country tried to establish new leadership. The military supports different factions and no one knows how committed they are to their present leadership. There is already some trouble and dissent in the ranks. RAO supports the DAO's perception of the situation.

¶4. (C) The Political Officer (PO) reported that the coalition that supported TGV was composed of several factions. They united behind TGV because he was a vehicle to vocally oppose the president. They will not likely stay united or support TGV if the president departs. Therefore, the resignation of the president may well lead to future instability.

5.(C) The Management Officer (MO) voiced concern that the events of the last few days had crossed some additional tripwires. His concerns include the palace takeover, the possibility that the president and his supporters will refuse to give up peacefully and informal confirmation that the reduction of Air France flights was a function of the security situation. The MO recommended moving to ordered departure.

6.(C) The Regional Security Officer (RSO) expressed that the crisis has entered another phase and asked the EAC to reconsider the current situation. With the local press - both in print and radio - expressing anti-American sentiment at times against the Ambassador by name, RSO warned the Embassy or Americans could be targets. RSO will continue to monitor the situation and all persons are advised to be more alert to their surroundings, reporting anything suspicious or unusual that they might see.

7.(C) The Ambassador did not attend this EAC meeting, as he was meeting with the greater diplomatic community at the CMR.

8.(C) The EAC determined by vote (three for and seven against) not to recommend to the Ambassador that he request ordered departure. However, most of the committee felt that the events of the day could change their opinion and another EAC was recommended for later today or tomorrow. Note: The DCM will host an EAC at 8:00 am local time to specifically review tripwires.

MARQUARDT